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ABSTRACT

This report addresses issues related to the responsibility of public schools to prepare rural youth for life choices about careers, postsecondary education, and place of residence. A synthesis of current research literature, as well as the perceptions of rural educators and policymakers in the Northwest, explore some potential resolutions to the dilemmas. Background information is provided on the advantages and disadvantages of living in rural areas; the rural migration dilemma; rural student, parent, and counselor aspirations; demographic changes and their impact; financial and economic trends; and the importance of community ties to rural youth. A discussion of the role of rural schools focuses on their need to prepare students adequately both for being contributing citizens in their own communities and for leaving if they desire; schools must enable students to recognize that they have choices and empower them to make informed decisions. Special attention is directed towards the importance of developing practical programs for non-college-bound students. The report concludes that in rural areas, school issues are community issues, and urges that all components of the community be involved in adapting rural education systems to the changes occurring throughout the United States. An appendix delineates a range of community-based activities derived from rural education forums held in the northwestern United States. Contains 43 references. (RAH)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED 377 999

School-to-Life Planning:

Broadening Rural Students' Horizons

Prepared by:

Janis L. Hull
Rural Education Program

September 1994

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SCHOOL-TO-LIFE PLANNING:

BROADENING RURAL STUDENTS' HORIZONS

Prepared by:

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September 1994

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PREFACE

by Steve Nelson, Director
Rural Education Program

Rural lives and livelihoods have long been associated with strong ties to the earth. It is rural residents who are *uprooted* by economic depression or who *pull up roots* to search for greater space and opportunity. A rural heritage has forced young adults to make choices not just about their career, but the locale in which that career will be pursued. What is the responsibility of the school and public education system in preparing youth for these choices? Do rural youth have a choice about their future?

These decisions have faced rural youth long before Dorothy clicked her heels to return to her native Kansas. The literature of western civilization (as with all civilizations I would suspect) provide metaphors for the pros and cons of these life choices. On the one hand, Cowley points out that, *"for the whole world, without a native home, is nothing but a prison of larger room."* In some ways Dorothy says it better, but it does drive home the point that having a sense of roots is important. Our good friend Shakespeare, on the other hand, appears to have advocated for the more mobile lifestyle, *"Such wind as scatters young men through the world to seek their fortunes further than at home, where small experience grows."* Maybe the early Greeks were the ones who had the best (and most pervasive) view. Aeschylus would have been a fan of Glynda the Good Witch, *"Now will I to home and household hearth move on, and first give thanks unto the Gods who led me forth and brought me back again."*

The Rural Dilemma is well documented--attain a high level of education and you must leave rural areas to acquire employment commensurate with the educational preparation. Stay in the rural area and economic opportunities will be limited regardless of educational attainment. Move to the city with low levels of education and you will enjoy low skill/low pay employment as a member of a larger, more densely populated group. Why should this be a dilemma? Obviously high levels of educational attainment provide rural youth with the best opportunities and avenues for the future. But high levels of *what kind of educational attainment* is the real question. What and how should small, rural communities go about making decisions about the nature and scope of their school programs?

This report provides a synthesis of current research literature, as well as the perceptions of rural education practitioners and policymakers in the Northwest, to help explore the answers to this question.

INTRODUCTION

The term "school-to-life" is used to encapsulate not only the choices of employment or postsecondary education, but also the other choices youth must make after high school. For example, should they stay in their communities or should they leave; and how does the choice of where a person chooses to stay or go impact other life choices. For many rural youth, staying in their community may limit their access to postsecondary education, training, and employment. On the other hand, leaving may mean cutting themselves off from their support system and the security of their home town.

Little research is available on the influence of the rural community on adult development and occupational success (Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, & Bills, 1993; Donaldson, 1986). The majority of research on youth life choices has been focused in urban settings. As a result, the urban focus in educational research has hindered understanding the effects of rural schools and communities on the educational and occupational aspirations of rural youth (Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, & Bills, 1993). However, increasing economic and social stresses in rural areas necessitate that attention be given to this population if small, rural communities are to survive.

Many rural areas have experienced worsening economic and social conditions in recent years, which become further affected by geographic isolation. As Elliott (1987) discovered in her study:

> The influences of rural isolation were identified consistently by administrators and teachers alike . . . as a primary disadvantage of education in rural schools. For many if not most of the rural schools . . . this isolation translates into limited exposure and limited access to needed educational services . . .; in turn students fear new experiences and they are unwilling to risk exposure to unfamiliar surroundings. (p. 3)

Isolation may become part of the social norm--the reluctance to seek out new or different resources. Isolation can also lead to a community's inability to access services needed to deal with the effects of economic decline. Helge (1990) stresses that, "Poverty, family

instability, depression and suicide, teen pregnancy, and alcohol and drug abuse have increased as farming, timber, coal, and some fishing industries have declined" (p. 8). Moreover, social support services to meet community needs are often not available due to isolation and dwindling school and community budgets. Interestingly, some positive rural cultural factors, such as the traditions of independence and individualism, can prevent community members' willingness to access services that may be available (Helge, 1990). Because of geographic isolation, economic decline, and worsening social conditions, a large percent of rural students are being identified as at-risk of not achieving educational or occupational success.

Despite the variety of difficult issues facing many rural schools and communities, the problems are not insurmountable. Rural people are traditionally resilient, often coming together in the face of adversity. This report will look at demographics that affect economic and social conditions in rural areas, the influence of rural community ties on the life plans of rural youth, the role that rural schools can play to help students make informed life choices, and promising ideas of Northwest rural educators. An annotated bibliography of suggested readings related to rural school-to-life issues is also provided.

For this report, rural will be used to refer to areas of the United States outside of metropolitan areas. Metropolitan, or "metro", areas refer to a Metropolitan Statistical Area as defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget. Central cities are the largest cities within each of the designated metro areas. Suburbs are the remainder of metro areas outside of the central cities (Sherman, 1992).

THE RURAL MIGRATION DILEMMA

For more than a century, America has seen a movement of rural youth from their native communities toward urban centers (Donaldson, 1986; Sherman, 1992). Many rural areas are experiencing the net out-migration of the better educated young adults and

their families who tend to value education the most and the net in-migration of retirement-age people who may not fully support local education (McGranahan, 1994). The net out-migration of these educated families and the resulting decrease in enrollments negatively affects operating budgets in rural schools. With declining financial resources, districts are often forced to make cutbacks in curricular choices--primarily in professional technical education programs. Along with a decrease in the number of families that had once chosen rural areas for their land-based livelihood, there is an increase in what Elliott (1987) refers to as "transients." In Elliott's study (1987), teachers and administrators referred to this population as families that move into the rural community for the low-cost housing and often leave when the rent comes due. The issues related to migration, including reduced financial resources, may result in increased numbers of students suffering from the effects of low self-esteem. Helge (1990) observes:

> In communities with long-standing social, educational, and economic problems, citizens may develop low aspirations regarding education, graduation, and employment. Low self-esteem may become pervasive and students may have to exhibit wider ranges of "deviancy" before their behavior attracts the attention of the school or community. (p. 1)

Unlike choices afforded to high school students of past decades, post-high school career and educational choices are not as clear today. Sundberg, Tyler, and Poole (1984), report that although perceived life choices have broadened considerably for young people, the actual narrowing of employment opportunities can make the developmental task of constructing a life plan more difficult. This developmental task appears even more problematic for rural students. For rural youth, the choice to leave almost always means moving more than a commutable distance from their home. Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, and Bills (1993) summarize rural students' choices to stay in their communities or to move:

> . . . because rural youth have close ties to their traditional rural communities they are confronted with the dilemma of either staying in their rural communities, which do not have an economic base to offer sustaining work, or move away from family and friends in order to succeed in the "modern" world. This pull to remain close to family and friends while at the same time feeling a need to choose an occupation which is congruent with one's education and training, places enormous stress on the rural youth as he or she makes the transition to adulthood. (pp. 6-7)

The net migration of rural youth affects the stability of the community and, therefore, affects the multiplicity of life choices rural youth see for themselves. According to Haller and Monk (1992), the net loss of rural youth can potentially create contradictory implications for education policy. Rural communities must choose either to invest declining resources in a school for which the community's existence may be unalterably terminal or to try to maintain a healthy school that may revitalize the community. Haller and Monk (1992) explain how contradictory education policy positions can influence a rural school's curriculum:

> . . . a school board, believing that a net loss of its youth to urban areas is inevitable, might reasonably feel an obligation to prepare students for urban jobs and for making the transition to metropolitan living. . . . Another board might view such actions as a form of community suicide and feel an obligation to attempt to slow the tide of migration by orienting programs to rural living and the local job market. (p. 49)

Curricular offerings influenced by the net-migration of rural youth may not, however, affect choices rural students make. In Haller and Monk's study (1992), they found that curricular offerings had little influence on the decisions students made about whether or not to leave their communities. In addition, they found that school size had neither a direct nor indirect impact on migration. They found that the primary determinants of a youth's decision to leave home was based on individual student traits, such as socio-economic status (SES) and intelligence, coupled with structural aspects of schools and communities such as isolation, intellectual levels, and ruralness. Of the high schools included in Haller and Monk's study, 23.9 percent of urban seniors, 32.0 percent

of suburban seniors, and 41.3 percent of rural seniors had migrated more than 50 miles away from their home communities within six years. Based on their study, Haller and Monk conclude:

> . . . our results ought to be sobering to any reformer convinced that the simple manipulation of schooling attributes can have far-reaching implications for external social phenomena such as migration. While there may be many excellent and compelling reasons for reforming curricular offerings or changing average school size, our results make it clear that such reasons ought not to include expected changes in the migration behaviors of youth. (p. 68)

RURAL STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

The enormity of the life choices that rural students must make, combined with rural economic instability, affects their aspirations. Research indicates that rural youth have "lower" academic and vocational aspirations than their suburban and urban counterparts (Breen & Quaglia, 1991; Cobb, McIntire, & Pratt, 1989; Elliott, 1987; McCracken, Barcinas, & Wims, 1991; Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, & Bills, 1993). Breen and Quaglia (1991) also reported that, ". . . those rural students who do expect to continue their education aspire to lower levels of higher education, express lower levels of self-confidence in completing the degree requirements, and expect to pursue higher education for a shorter time than urban students" (p. 223). Elliott (1987) and Cobb, McIntire, and Pratt (1989) reported similar evidence of low student aspirations. Elliott attributes these lowered aspirations, in part, to low expectations from rural parents:

> Teachers saw daily evidence of "questionable decisions . . . made on the basis of fear of the unknown," or an inability to imagine things differently than they were. . . . Several teachers [also] expressed their frustration of not being able to influence these students' decisions. Instead, the greatest influence came from parents and friends equally unfamiliar and fearful of the world beyond their own rural communities. (p. 5)

Similarly, Cobb, McIntire, and Pratt (1989) found a noticeable difference between the expectations of rural and urban parents. In their study, they found rural parents to be

much less supportive of full-time college than urban parents and more supportive of full-time jobs, trade schools, and the military.

Unfortunately, with fewer businesses remaining open in many rural communities, there are also fewer opportunities for rural youth to observe career models or gain "hands-on" experience in a variety of occupations. While rural areas continue to lose jobs in resource-based industries, there is little evidence that new jobs are being developed (Reid, 1989). As a result, there is a gap between the career models available for rural students and the skills needed to participate in nonresource-based industries.

Not all researchers agree that low aspirations are a problem for rural America. Haller and Virkler (1993) found a small difference in the aspirations of rural and nonrural youth. They go on to conclude that much of this small difference is due to the lower socioeconomic status (SES) of rural families, and because rural youth aspire less often to "highest-level" professional jobs that are not common in rural areas. According to Haller and Virkler (1993), adolescents aspire to what they know or can imagine. For rural students, this is limited by narrower, specialized economies than those of their urban counterparts. In addition, these more limited rural economies tend to also require less education.

> A higher (though declining) proportion of the industries in rural communities are agricultural or are concerned with refining raw materials. Thus, rural students may tend to aspire disproportionately to the agricultural, service, and manual occupations that are associated with those industries--that is, to occupations that require relatively little education. This tendency will be exacerbated to the extent that parents' occupations influence students' aspirations. (Haller & Virkler, 1993, p. 171)

While Haller and Virkler (1993) indicate that family dynamics are beyond the reach of educational policy or practice, schools may have the ability to expose students to a broader range of occupations. However, Haller and Virkler also point out that raising the educational aspirations of rural youth by influencing their occupational goals may, in turn, influence the out-migration of a community's most academically talented youth.

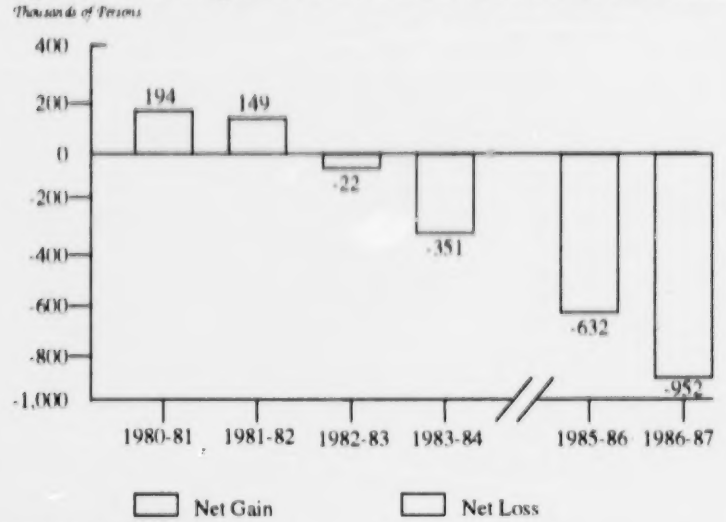
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND RURAL IMPACT

Changing demographics have had a clear impact on rural areas. Rural communities have experienced a net loss in population, a decrease in resource-based and manufacturing occupations, an increase in low-wage jobs, and an increase in the percent of poor living in these areas. Although rural areas have experienced increases in the service industry and dramatic decreases in the resource-based industry, the myth still pervades that rural people can live off of the land--rural people are believed to be able to maintain a good standard of living despite these demographic changes. However, demographics support what rural communities have been telling government agencies for more than a decade--that their existence is endangered from the effects of increasing employment instability, poverty, isolation, growing social and environmental unrest, and the consequent net out-migration of the young and well educated.

Population Trends

As Figure 1 displays, rural areas experienced a net gain in population in the early 1980s. However, since 1983, rural areas have been experiencing a net loss in population. In 1987 alone, rural areas experienced a net loss of 952,000 people nationally.

Figure 1. Net Migration for U.S. Rural Areas in the 1980s

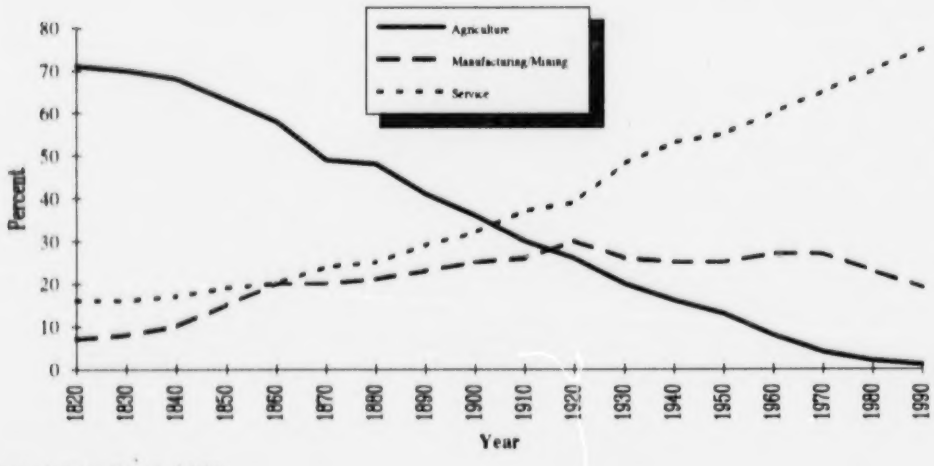


Note: Data for 1984-85 not available
From: O'Hare, 1988, p. 4

Shifting Economic Base

Rural areas have experienced substantial decreases in the availability of resource-based and manufacturing occupations. The agricultural industry, once the primary livelihood of rural areas, has decreased steadily since about 1840 (see Figure 2). Since 1820, agriculture has gone from more than 70 percent of the workforce to less than 5 percent in 1990, while the service industry has grown from less than 20 percent of the workforce in 1820 to nearly 80 percent in 1990. Historically, service wages have tended to be lower than other industries. Other mainstays of rural areas, manufacturing and mining, remained stable for many decades, but have also decreased steadily since 1970. Manufacturing and mining has reduced approximately 10 percent of its workforce from 1970 to 1990.

Figure 2. A Comparison of Three U.S. Workforce Production Sectors



Adapted from Swyt, 1986

Low-Wage Jobs

Within industries, there has been an increase in the percent of low-wage jobs available to rural workers (see Table 1). While the percent of rural workers in any given industry has remained fairly stable, the percent of low-wage jobs has increased. The

greatest increase in low-wage jobs has been in the industries of extraction (+13 percent), manufacturing (+11 percent), and trade (+11 percent).

Table 1. Distribution of Rural Workers Across Industries and Change in Share of Workers in Each Industry in Low-Wage Jobs, 1979-1987

Industry:	1979 Percent of Rural Workers	1979 Percent in Low-Wage Jobs	1987 Percent of Rural Workers	1987 Percent in Low-Wage Jobs	Increase in Low-Wage Jobs
Extraction	7	61	7	74	+13%
Manufacturing	25	31	22	42	+11%
Trade	24	61	28	72	+11%
Service	28	49	29	58	+9%
Government	4	33	4	37	+4%
Other	13	33	10	39	+6%

Adapted from O'Hare and Pauti, 1990, p. 15

Furthermore, rural areas have experienced a larger increase in the number of low-wage jobs than have urban areas. As displayed in Table 2, not only have rural workers experienced a greater increase in low-wage jobs than urban workers (7 percent more), rural workers have had a substantial decrease (13 percent) in mean earnings from 1979 to 1987. This is in contrast to urban areas where workers experienced a one percent increase in mean earnings during the same time period.

Table 2. Share of Urban and Rural Workers Ages 16 to 34 in Low-, Middle-, and High-Wage Jobs and Mean Earnings of Young Workers, 1979 and 1987

	URBAN Percent distribution 1979	URBAN Percent distribution 1987	URBAN Change 1979-87	RURAL Percent distribution 1979	RURAL Percent distribution 1987	RURAL Change 1979-87
Low-Wage	37	41	+4	46	57	+11
Middle-Wage	62	57	-5	53	42	-11
High-Wage	2	2	0	1	1	0
MEAN EARNINGS (in 1987 dollars)						
	$14,103	$14,254	+1%	$11,992	$10,490	-13%

From O'Hare and Pauti, 1990, p. 9

According to McGranahan (1994), "The increasing concentration of more highly educated young adults in urban areas explains in part the increasing disparity in earnings and income between rural and urban areas" (p. 7). As shown in Table 3, all nonmetropolitan area types have lower per capita incomes than any metropolitan category, including central city. The more rural and isolated the area is, the lower the per capita income.

Table 3. Per Capita Income by ERS* County Rurality Types

Rurality Codes		1990 Population	Population Per Square Mile	Per Capita Income 1988
0 Metro	Central Counties, 1 Million Plus	69,662,368	981	$18,245
1 Metro	Fringe Counties, 1 Million Plus	43,714,038	469	$19,804
2 Metro	250,000 to 1 Million	54,994,615	248	$15,983
3 Metro	Less Than 250,000	22,589,641	127	$13,961
4 Nonmetro	20,000 + Urban, and Adj.	10,846,569	76	$13,727
5 Nonmetro	20,000 + Urban, and Not Adj.	8,807,724	36	$12,575
6 Nonmetro	2,500 to 20K Urban, and Adj.	15,098,923	36	$12,216
7 Nonmetro	2,500 to 20K Urban, and Not Adj.	14,962,484	17	$12,077
8 Nonmetro	Completely Rural, and Adj.	2,567,924	14	$11,990
9 Nonmetro	Completely Rural, and Not Adj.	3,807,315	7	$11,665
	Totals	247,051,601	83	$16,290

From 1990 Census Population and Housing, BEA Personal Income, and ERS County Types
*ERS = Economic Research Service

Economic and Occupational Benefits

Even when controlling for urban and rural educational and job-type characteristics, rural workers still receive fewer economic and occupational benefits. According to Dudenhefer (1993):

- Employers reward the education and experience of rural workers less than they reward those of metropolitan workers.

- About two-thirds of the earnings gap between rural and urban men is due to the fact that education and experience command fewer dollars in rural areas than in metropolitan regions.
- Rural workers are more likely to be poor than are urban workers with the same amount of schooling.
- Not only are education and work rewarded less in rural areas, the earnings of rural workers relative to those of urban workers have declined dramatically. (p. 21)

The Rural Poor

As rural areas continue to see fewer economic opportunities along with increases in low-wage occupations, poverty persists. According to Dudenhefer (1993), rural poor are more likely to be chronically poor, regardless of race, than their urban counterparts. A community is considered to be chronically poor when a majority of the community members remain below the poverty level despite efforts at economic revitalization. In the 1980s, the poverty rate for rural areas rose from 18.6 percent to 20.4 percent, well above the 1990 urban rate of 16 percent (GAO, 1994).

While the Northwest five-state region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) experienced an overall increase in the number of school-age children, it also experienced a substantially greater increase in the number of poor school-age children (see Table 4). The percent of poor school-age children grew at a rate of five times that of all school-age children. In rural areas, the rate of poor rural school-age children increased at nine times that of all rural school-age children. Of the five states, rural Alaska faired best; they experienced an increase in the number of rural school-age children while experiencing a decrease in the percent of poor rural school-age children. Idaho did not experience any significant differences between rural and all school-age children in percent of change from 1980 to 1990. Montana had the largest, overall, increase in the percent of poor school-age children in the region. Within Montana, there was a decrease (-3.1) in the percent of all school-age children. In addition, rural areas in the state experienced the largest increase (41.4 percent) in the percent of poor rural school-age children. Rural Oregon

experienced the greatest decrease (-6.1) in the percent of school-age children compared to the other states. However, Oregon experienced a substantial increase in the percent (24.9) of poor rural school-age children. Washington had the second largest increase in poor rural school-age children at 38.1 percent.

Table 4. Change in Number of Poor School-Age Children in Region, 1980-1990

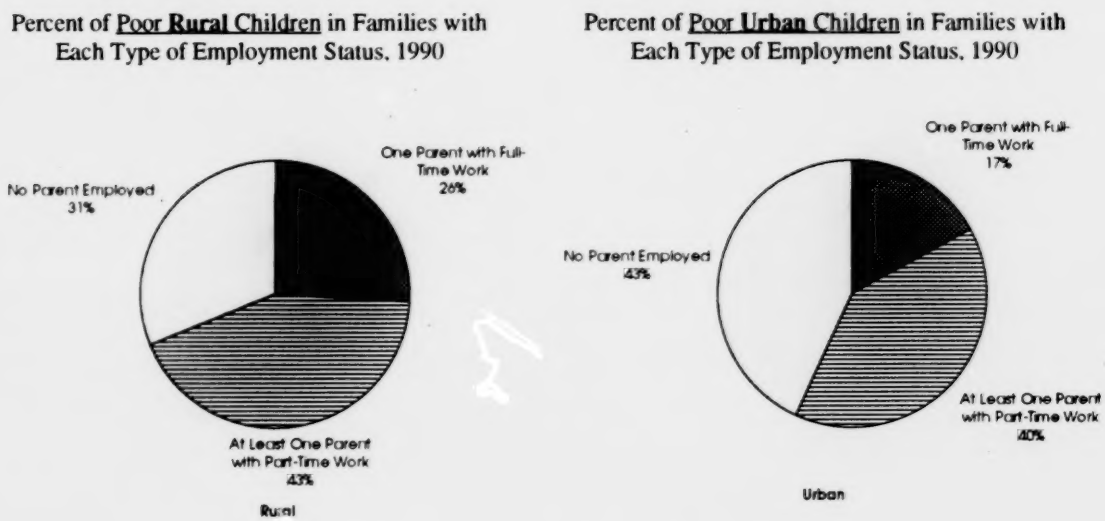
	All School-Age Children		Poor School-Age Children	
	Percent Change in All Children 1980-90	Percent Change in Rural Children 1980-90	Percent Change in All Children 1980-90	Percent Change in Rural Children 1980-90
Alaska	27.4	34.8	6.9	-0.5
Idaho	6.4	4.9	14.2	12.5
Montana	-3.1	-2.0	39.2	41.4
Oregon	-0.9	-6.1	22.8	24.9
Washington	6.6	3.3	31.8	38.1
Total	**4.6**	**2.7**	**26.3**	**25.5**

From GAO, 1994

Rural families in poverty are more likely than urban families to have two parents in the household and are more likely to have at least one parent working full- or part-time. Rural families in poverty are also less likely to receive public assistance benefits, increasing the gap of well-being between rural and urban poor (Stoops & Hull, 1993). Although recent statistics indicate an increase in single-female parent families in rural areas, there are still 13 percent fewer poor rural school-age children from this family type than urban school-age children (United States General Accounting Office, 1994; Sherman, 1992). Furthermore, 13 percent more poor rural school-age children, than urban, come from a married-couple family type. In addition, as Figure 3 shows, poor rural children are less likely to have unemployed parents than poor urban children. In other words, rural poor are more likely to be working than urban poor. According to

Haas (1990), in 1979 about one-third of rural workers had earnings too low to keep a family of four above the poverty line. As indicated in Table 2, mean earnings are decreasing in rural areas (decreasing 13 percent from 1979 to 1987).

Figure 3. More Poor Rural Parents Work Than Poor Urban Parents


Percent of Poor Rural Children in Families with Each Type of Employment Status, 1990
No Parent Employed 31%
One Parent with Full-Time Work 26%
At Least One Parent with Part-Time Work 43%
Rural
Percent of Poor Urban Children in Families with Each Type of Employment Status, 1990
One Parent with Full-Time Work 17%
No Parent Employed 43%
At Least One Parent with Part-Time Work 40%
Urban

From GAO, 1994, p. 22

Not only do rural poor tend to be working poor, but they tend to be the chronically poor. This low economic status has been found to affect student performance. Henry, Hare, Phelps, Raftery, and Franklin (1993) have found that:

> The impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on school performance is evidenced through the value placed on education by children and families from different social classes and through differential education aspirations . . . Educational performance of students is more heavily influenced by socioeconomic and associated characteristics than by what actually occurs in school . . . (p. 5)

High School and Beyond data (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES],1980) supports that there is an impact of SES on student's postsecondary educational plans--however, even when controlling for SES, rural students appear to have more limited educational aspirations (see Table 5).

Table 5. Postsecondary Educational Plans of 1980 High School Seniors by SES Quartiles and Context (second and third quartiles not included)

	Lowest Quartile (Lowest SES)			Highest Quartile (Highest SES)			Total		
	Urban	Suburb	Rural	Urban	Suburb	Rural	Urban	Suburb	Rural
No plans	24.7	34.6	38.9	3.5	4.1	8.1	16.9	15.7	23.8
Vocational-Tech.	24.6	23.4	26.9	8.0	7.7	7.7	18.1	18.1	22.1
Less than 4 yr. degree	13.6	17.4	14.1	11.0	13.0	11.4	13.8	15.9	15.4
BA/BS degree	20.3	15.0	13.7	34.8	33.6	38.0	27.7	26.5	23.5
Advanced degree	16.8	9.6	6.5	42.7	41.6	34.8	23.5	23.8	15.1

From *High School and Beyond*, 1980

NCES (1980, 1986) has also found that rural youth do not aspire to postsecondary education as frequently as those in either urban or suburban schools (see Table 6). Approximately 12 percent more suburban students and 8 percent more urban students are likely to enter college than rural students.

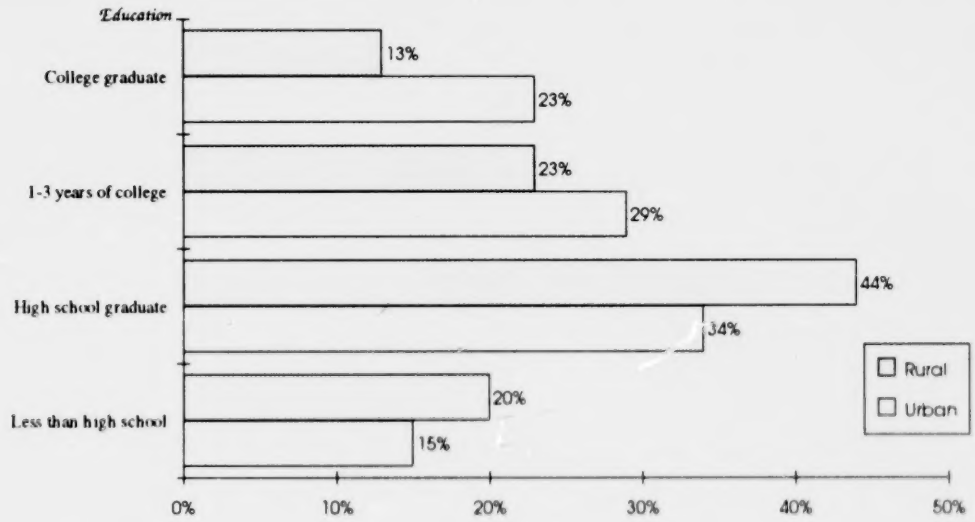
Table 6. Entrance into Postsecondary Education Institutions Between 1980-1984 by Context

	Rural		Suburban		Urban	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Entered College	1,802	61.6	3,376	73.5	1,294	70.0
Never Entered College	1,124	38.4	1,220	26.5	555	30.0

From *High School and Beyond*, 1980-1986

Overall, rural adults have lower educational attainment than urban adults (see Figure 4). Rural adults are almost half as likely to be college graduates and more likely to be either high school graduates only or have less than a high school degree.

Figure 4. Educational Attainment of Adults 18 to 44 by Urban/Rural Status, 1987



From O'Hare, 1988, p. 9

Cobb, McIntire, and Pratt (1989) found that, based on student perceptions, parents, guidance counselors, and teachers had lower postsecondary aspirations for rural high school students than urban. Tables 7 and 8 show a consistent pattern of lower postsecondary aspirations for rural high school students. This tendency is especially apparent among rural parental expectations.

Table 7. Perceived Parental Expectations of Urban and Rural Students After High School

	Father		Mother	
	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
College	57.9	49.2	72.3	60.0
Full-Time Job	8.5	14.1	9.2	14.1
Trade School	6.0	9.5	7.7	11.5
Military	3.1	4.1	2.9	3.2
Parents Don't Care	2.5	3.9	1.6	3.1
Don't Know What Parents Expect	8.8	9.9	3.8	5.7

From Cobb, McIntire, & Pratt, 1989

Table 8. Perceived Guidance Counselors' and Teachers' Expectations of Urban and Rural Students After High School

	Guidance Counselors		Teachers	
	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
College	56.1	50.1	56.3	48.6
Full-Time Job	1.4	2.0	2.0	2.0
Trade School	4.2	6.1	3.9	4.3
Military	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0
Guidance Counselors & Teachers Don't Care	5.7	5.8	7.5	8.7
Don't Know What is Expected	22.7	26.1	22.7	27.7

From Cobb, McIntire, and Pratt, 1989

In return, rural high school students also have lower postsecondary education expectations for themselves than urban or suburban high school students. As indicated in Table 9, the median percent of urban and suburban students believe they will achieve at least a B.S./B.A. Degree. In contrast, the median percent of rural students believe they will only achieve an Associate's Degree.

Table 9. Level of Education Urban, Suburban, and Rural Students Think They Will Achieve

	Urban (%)	Suburban (%)	Rural (%)
Less than high school	0.7	0.3	0.8
High school grad only	14.1	13.7	22.8
Less than two years at business or vocational school	5.8	6.4	10.2
Two years or more at business or vocational school	11.9	10.3	12.8
Less than two years college	3.2	2.8	2.8
Two or more years of college with Associate's Degree	12.3	12.6	12.6
B.S./B.A. Degree	26.1	27.8	22.6
Master's Degree or equivalent	13.1	14.2	9.0
Ph.D., M.D., or equivalent	12.9	11.8	6.3

From Cobb, McIntire, and Pratt, 1989

COMMUNITY TIES

Although rural students are often told that they must leave their communities to attain material success, studies indicate that many rural students prefer a life close to family, friends, and community values. Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, and Bills (1993) found a direct relationship between self-esteem and living close to family, a supportive social network, and feeling part of one's community. Often, rural students who do venture outside of their communities, find they are even more unprepared for life outside their community than they had thought.

Donaldson (1986) studied a rural community and found membership in the community was a significant factor in narrowing future options and life decisions. Opportunities leading out of the community or upward mobility appear to be more important to cosmopolitan youth. Donaldson (1986) also identified three basic patterns of rural youth: the "traditional," "modern achieving," and "questioning." Traditional youth were mostly inexperienced beyond their home town, chose jobs in their community, and married soon after high school.

> Of the three patterns of growth outlined here, this one depends most heavily on the endurance of [the community] as a rural town and on the survival of its cultural forms. (p. 124)

Modern achieving youth described themselves in future-oriented and achievement-motivated terms. They were more experienced in the world, more successful in school, and believed they could get ahead through forward planning and modern occupational choices.

> In contrast to the traditional youth, these young [community members] operate outside the patterns of old [community values] and, in fact, chart their progress and that of the town by the distance they put between themselves and the "old-fashioned," "narrow-minded," and "boring." (p. 124)

The questioning youth were more experienced outside of the community and more uncertain about their futures than the traditional or the modern achieving. They attempt to integrate the "good" from what they have observed and learned outside their community with the "good" that they know to exist within their community.

> . . . the questioning youth recognizes the conflicts and paradoxes of [the community], where the old-fashioned good life and the modern good life do not seem to meet . . . these young men and women accept the merits and the inevitability of modernization but seek new ways to integrate it without destroying the old community values and spirit at the same time. The identity of these youth is closely tied to their commitment to assisting [the community] make this integration. (p. 124)

Donaldson (1986) warns that although this study reflects one community, and all rural communities share different values and experiences, clearly, "Growing up does not mean moving away" (p. 124). Donaldson expands the idea that rural youth do not have to make an either/or choice:

> Rather than continue to force a choice between community and individual solvency--a choice which widens the gap between "backward" rural areas and "modern" America--find ways to make rural towns viable without dismembering them as communities. (p. 125)

While strong community ties can have a positive influence on rural youth, they can also result in educational and occupational limitations. McIntire, Cobb, and Pratt (1989) found that low peer and parental expectations resulted in low aspirations of rural students. Elliott (1987) found in her study that students felt powerless over their future:

> The future envisioned by many rural students includes either taking over the family farm or following parental footsteps into blue-collar employment. Students reluctantly acknowledged the fate of either of these plans but appeared powerless to replace them with new, more viable ones. (p. 16)

Elliott (1987) also found that, "Increased expressed postsecondary plans may have less to do with what they [students] expect to do after graduation and more to do with what they interpret to be the 'appropriate' success model held up by school personnel . . ." (pp. 26-27). Schools, parents, and communities need to recognize and encourage that aspirations

are multidimensional (Quaglia, 1989). Success can mean more than postsecondary education. The school's role should be to assist students in identifying their opportunities and goals based on students' own ideas of what success is.

For those rural students who choose to leave their communities, many feel they have not been adequately prepared. Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, and Bills (1993) found in their study that many students who left their rural communities had financial difficulties due to college loans and a lack of information and training on managing their money. Some students also felt that the school had misled them to believe that if they had a college degree they were guaranteed a job. Furthermore, Schonert-Reichl, Elliott, and Bills (1993) reported another commonalty among those students who left their rural community--they longed to return to their home state and the safety of their small, rural community.

Geographic isolation also contributes to rural students' lack of understanding of educational and occupational opportunities outside of their communities. For those schools that are equipped to access distance education, students' awareness of educational and occupational opportunities can be expanded. Educational technologies such as audio teleconferencing, linked with microcomputers or interactive television, can provide more information to rural students about possible educational and occupational opportunities inside and outside of their native communities (Sherman, 1992; University of the State of New York, 1992).

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

For some rural communities, the hope is that rural youth will have the opportunity to escape the oppression of economic and social problems by moving into metro areas. For other communities, the hope is that the rural youth will choose to stay and help maintain or revitalize the community's economic base. Many of these rural communities will cease to exist without their youth. Schools have an important role to

play in helping rural youth negotiate their way through these two extremes. According to Sherman (1992), rural children are not learning in their schools or their communities the skills they need to succeed in a future economy. Rural schools need to develop a vision of their role to prepare students for both options--to be contributing citizens in their own communities and to have the confidence and skills to leave if they desire.

Rural schools must pass this vision on to their students to help them plan for their future. Schools can help by also motivating students to have more challenging aspirations and to combat stereotypes that perpetuate poor images of rural life. Rural students' motivation will also improve and their aspirations increase if schools link the learning process to creating job and career opportunities and providing functional training and development of realistic goals.

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), through the U.S. Department of Labor, has identified five competencies and three foundations that bridge the gap between school and work--these five competencies that rest on the three-part foundation are considered the basis of the modern workplace. The five competencies include:

- **Resources**: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources
- **Interpersonal**: Works with others
- **Information**: Acquires and uses information
- **Systems**: Understands complex inter-relationships
- **Technology**: Works with a variety of technologies (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991, p. 12)

The foundation for achieving these competencies is made-up through intellectual skills and personal qualities. The foundation includes three parts:

- **Basic Skills**: Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens, and speaks

- **Thinking Skills**: Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn and reasons
- **Personal Qualities**: Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991, p. 16)

Donaldson (1986) found that, ". . . the popular image of the listless, narrow-minded, unfulfilled rural young adult, . . . creates serious self-doubt in rural young" (p. 122). Teachers can encourage students to look at the positive aspects and opportunities available in rural areas. Several efforts already underway have been successful in helping rural students develop community pride. The following programs provide examples of how students can become meaningfully involved in studying their own communities--whether it be through surveys, oral histories, or community development. As a result, students' self-worth and concern for their community are enhanced.

- REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning): This is an experiential learning process where students research, plan, set-up, and operate entrepreneurial businesses that facilitate learning and service to the community (REAL, date unknown).
- Foxfire: This program involves students in writing and publishing articles about their communities' histories, cultures, and lifestyles (Miller, 1991).
- McREL's Rural Institute: This program teaches youth about their communities and the practical application of data collection and analysis (Nachtigal, 1982).
- Community/School Development Partnership (*CDP*): This is a community and school partnership designed to achieve community-defined development goals (Miller, 1993).
- The Native American Site Artifact Project: This project is based in Seaside, Oregon and involves students in meeting a community need while learning multiple academic skills and constructing a prehistory of their area (Braunger & Hart-Landsberg, 1994).

Miller (1991) indicates that the use of community as curriculum, ". . . serves a psychological role helping to validate and legitimize one's identity and membership in a community" (p. 39).

The rural school systems' ability to prepare youth for life beyond school depends on the ability of educators to understand the opportunities that students will encounter

and the skills they will require--whether they intend to pursue continuing education or work (McGranahan, 1994). Breen and Quaglia (1991) identify some basic curricular changes that schools must make to better prepare their students:

> . . . structure changes in education need to take place in order to take advantage of the structure growth in the economy. The work in rural areas is changing from factory and industrial work to business and professional opportunities. Therefore, educators need to help students broaden their aspirations to include considerations of a business and professional career. (p. 221)

According to Elliott (1987), the responsibility of the rural schools becomes two-fold:

> Rural students must depend on their teachers and schools to provide them with a realistic picture of alternative goals, while at the same time providing students with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to accomplish the goals. (p. 22)

In many cases, isolation can also prevent teachers from staying current and informed of new knowledge and trends. Advances in technology, along with a shifting economy, create a rapidly changing knowledge base that requires educators to continually learn (Miller & Hull, 1991). Unfortunately, many rural schools do not have the time or funding to provide staff development for their teachers. Furthermore, the responsibility to expand students' knowledge and provide staff development to teachers will be increasingly difficult for schools to meet while dealing with dwindling resources.

Rural teachers often lack the time, and the necessary accessibility to higher education institutions, to maintain a current base of knowledge; they also feel that they lack the basic resources required to prepare their students for the rigors of a four-year college. For example, it is not unusual for a rural school to have limited library resources to teach students research techniques or, in some cases, to develop an interest in leisure reading. Limited advanced coursework or lack of additional teaching staff can cause some teachers to utilize their time teaching to the learning level of the majority of students while keeping the work manageable for students less able and paying less attention to more capable students by instructing them to study on their own.

If small, rural schools are to be successful at their staff development efforts, they must overcome some constraints. Miller and Hull (1991) found several important elements in successful professional renewal efforts in rural areas--identifying needs, providing leadership, creating a school climate conducive to change, and developing staff ownership. Of these elements, they found school climate to play the primary role in inhibiting or facilitating staff renewal and change. Administrative leadership can play an important role in creating a positive school climate. Listed below are suggestions of how administrators can promote a school climate conducive to change:

- An understanding of the history of the school, staff, and community
- Sensitivity to the unique characteristics of rural schools and communities
- An understanding of the developmental/career stages of school personnel
- Recognition of the central role communication style plays in developing support and trust
- Recognition that the way people deal with change relates to their experiences, feelings of ownership, time, and, above all, the school climate in which the change takes place (Miller & Hull, 1991, pp. 39-40)

Quaglia (in press) has been studying aspirations in the schools for the past ten years. From that study, Quaglia has identified eight conditions that have proven to have positive effects on school organizations and on individual staff members. According to Quaglia (in press):

> We have had opportunities to witness firsthand the dynamics and complexities of the school environment. We believe that all members of the school community have value and can be productive contributors in educational environments, if it's expected of them and they're given the chance. Furthermore, we believe teachers, administrators, and support staff can make a difference in the lives of the children we serve when we provide an environment in which students' aspirations can flourish and grow.

These conditions represent a shift from educational rhetoric to a "back to basics", common sense approach of making a child's education first priority. These eight conditions are:

1. **Belonging**. Belonging is a type of relationship between two or more individuals characterized by a sense of connection, support, and community. Belonging includes

the experience of being a valued member of a group and the diminishment of barriers between groups.

2. **Achievement**. The condition of achievement for students must include effort, accomplishment, citizenship, and perseverance. The concept of achievement is not dependent on an innate capacity for success alone, but rather by a student's personal effort.

3. **Curiosity**. Curiosity is characterized as inquisitiveness, an eagerness and strong desire to learn new or interesting things, and a desire to satisfy the mind with new discoveries. Educators must pay careful attention to creating school environments that promote questioning and creative exploration to allow for the perpetuation of the curiosity motive.

4. **Mentoring**. Mentoring is a form of intervention necessary for the maintenance of motivation in students. Mentors must not only possess the qualities of patience and encouragement, but also those of high expectations and assertiveness.

5. **Self-Confidence**. Self-confidence is the extent of one's belief in oneself. Teachers, parents, and peers all have the ability and potential to help build a student's self-confidence and thus enhance the quality of their academic and personal achievement.

6. **Empowerment**. Empowerment allows students to take control and gain mastery of their actions. Empowerment can only be achieved in an environment that promotes mutual trust and acceptance of individual rights, responsibilities, options, and beliefs.

7. **Risk-Taking**. Risk-taking is defined as a behavior that is informed by a knowledge of potential losses involved, an awareness of the significance of such losses, and some uncertainty about those losses. The ability to make sensible and rational choices requires practice. Schools can encourage this important practice by providing environments that allow children to experience the excitement that comes with successful decision-making.

8. **Excitement**. The condition of excitement involves being "worked-up" about something, being emotionally involved, and having an intense experience or desire of some kind. Schools which foster excitement provide diversity in the delivery of their lessons, challenges, safe and secure environments, respect for individuality, and mentoring. (Quaglia, in press)

According to Quaglia (in press), "To achieve these conditions in school takes hard work, time, and the belief that schools can become different." However, these conditions can be achieved without outside expertise or technology and, therefore, are conditions that any rural school can achieve, regardless of isolation.

INCREASING NEEDS OF NON-COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS

Especially important is the fact that research identified the fastest growing population of at-risk rural students as those not planning to pursue postsecondary education (Elliott, 1987; Helge, 1990). However, due to declining rural economies and increasing state mandates, many rural high schools are directing their limited resources to expanding a college-track curriculum. As a result, rural schools are less able to meet the needs of students planning to directly enter the labor market after high school (Elliott, 1987). Furthermore, Helge (1990), who has extensively studied at-risk student populations in rural areas, reported that increased state mandates already affect many rural school districts.

> Career training and vocational education opportunities may be limited even in areas with low rates of college attendance. The fact that many states have recently attempted to raise graduation requirements and some have linked competency tests to higher standards has proven difficult for many rural districts. (p. 8)

In areas with low rates of college attendance and limited occupational training opportunities, many rural students, schools, and communities tend to be poorly equipped for new high tech, high skill jobs (Elliott, 1987; Reid, 1989).

However, recent legislation is directing more attention toward preparing students to have the skills necessary to enter the labor force--with or without an advanced degree. For the last several decades, high schools have been preparing students for a postsecondary education. As a result, students who choose not to pursue a college degree often lack the skills necessary to achieve steady employment. These federal programs will provide rural areas a chance to explore alternative sources of employment, many within their own communities, and train students for post-high school employment.

In March 1994, President Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and then in May 1994, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act was signed into law. Although these legislative acts are not technically connected, states will be expected to

create a linkage between them. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1994), the School-to-Work Opportunities Act will work in coordination with Goals 2000:

> . . . the School-to-Work Opportunities Act will support state and local efforts to build a school-to-work transition system that will help youth acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and labor market information they need to make a smooth transition from school to career-oriented work and to further education and training. (p. 3)

This coordination will connect efforts of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act toward achieving National Education Goals 3 and 5:

- . . . every school in America will ensure that all students . . . may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and "productive employment" in our modern economy.

- . . . every adult American . . . will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy. . .
  (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p. 2)

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is in the initial stage of implementation. In early 1994, states received grants to develop implementation plans for school-to-work systems. These systems must include three basic components:

- **Work-based learning:** a program of training or experiences, paid work experience, workplace mentoring, and instruction in general workplace competencies in a broad variety of elements of an industry;

- **School-based learning:** provides career exploration and counseling, instruction in a career major selected no later than the eleventh grade; a program of study that is based on standards proposed in the Administration's Goals 2000: Educate America Act and typically involves at least one year of postsecondary education; and periodic evaluations to identify students' academic strengths and weaknesses; and

- **Connecting activities:** coordinate involvement of employers, schools, and students; matching students and work-based learning activities; and training, mentors, and counselors.
  (Billings, 1994, p. 1)

The U.S. Department of Education (1993) suggests four models which communities may want to look at when planning to build bridges from school to work:

- **Youth Apprenticeships:** These emphasize structured experiences in the workplace.

- **Tech Prep:** A sequence of courses that, over four years (or more), prepare students for a range of occupations within one industry. Tech prep programs are often referred to as "2+2" because they frequently involve two years of high school and two years of postsecondary instruction.

- **Career Academies:** This is often a school within a larger high school, where a group of students and a team of teachers stay together for a several-hour block of time each day. These students and teachers often remain together for three years. Instruction is focused on a single industry cluster.

- **Cooperative Education:** Although less structured and of less duration than the other models, students may spend the morning at school and afternoons working at a local store or other business. They are often paid for their work, which is done to help students meet objectives spelled out in a written training agreement. (pp. 2-4)

Guidelines for states' implementation plans are flexible. Each state will have the responsibility of deciding how funds will be distributed within their states. Taking into consideration differences in school-to-work plans and systems, the U.S. Department of Education (1993) has identified eight principles commonly found in successful efforts:

1. Business as a major player
2. Community colleges in a pivotal role
3. High standards for all students
4. Incentives for students to meet high standards
5. Career guidance, exploration, and counseling for all students
6. Integrated academic and technical learning
7. Integrate school-based learning with work-site learning
8. Prepare students for two futures: jobs requiring technical skills and jobs requiring further learning, either job-specific training or four-year college

In addition to the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, grants are available to schools through the Corporation for National and Community Services. One component of this legislation is Learn and Serve

America Programs. These programs are school-based, and integrate service into daily academic life. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (1994), "Service-learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in service experiences that meet community needs and foster a lifetime commitment to service." The Learn and Serve America programs have two areas of focus: the K-12 Program, and the Higher Education Innovation Programs. The K-12 Program supports school and community-based organizations that engage school-aged youth in various kinds of service projects. The Higher Education Innovation Programs engage college students in meeting pressing community needs. Announcements for the first year of grants will be made by mid-year 1994.

WHAT CAN RURAL SCHOOLS DO TO HELP

Although many rural schools have limited resources, they still have the ability to influence long-range student outcomes. Henry, Hare, Phelps, Raftery, and Franklin (1993) suggest that the rural school may be the only place where school climate, teacher and student expectations, community values, and parental aspirations and expectations converge. Principals are pivotal in building a positive school climate by demonstrating that the school is a learning community, fostering collegiality, promoting individualized instruction, and encouraging involvement (Breen & Quaglia, 1991). Hansen (1993) indicates that school climate can also be enhanced when the curriculum is integrated to encourage decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, the encouragement of students to learn to think, learn to learn, and learn to be creative can broaden students' interests and increase their opportunities (Breen & Quaglia, 1991).

However, rural schools cannot improve long-range student outcomes in isolation from families and the community, especially when in many rural communities the school is likely to be the biggest business in town (Nachtigal, 1982). According to Miller (1991), "Those concerned about the decline of rural communities feel the most promising

direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community" (p. 43). Involving rural schools and communities is not for the purpose of persuading rural students to stay in their community, or to leave. The purpose is to enable students to recognize that they have choices and empower them with the ability to make informed decisions (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987).

Two general approaches have had a practical impact on enhancing rural students' ability to develop and execute visions for their future. The first approach centers around leadership development and the second on community/school partnerships. Leadership development is used to assist students in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Through processes of self-examination and evaluation of leadership styles and methods, students can develop their potential, build self-esteem, and become positive contributing members of their communities (Breen & Quaglia, 1991; Dickinson, 1982; Maher, 1985). There are numerous school- and community-based clubs and organizations committed to developing leadership skills in youth that can be found in rural areas. Many of these organizations combine training youth with serving the community's needs. Examples of some more common youth development organizations are:

- Boy Scouts of America: This is an educational program geared toward the character development, citizenship training, and mental and physical fitness of boys and young adults and conducts studies on problems and needs of youth. Programs are offered through community-based religious, civic, and educational groups.

- Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.: This group has developed Program Emphases which encourage self-awareness, interaction with others, development of values, and service to society. It provides girls with opportunities to expand personal interests, learn new skills, and explore career possibilities. Leadership training, international exchange programs, and conferences and seminars on topics ranging from management to child development are offered.

- Camp Fire Boys and Girls: The organization provides, through a program of informal education, opportunities for youth to realize their potential and to function effectively as responsible, caring, and self-directed individuals. It seeks to improve conditions in society that affect youth. Activities focus on small group learning by

doing, developing a positive self-image, responsibility and creativity, gaining decision-making and planning skills, and learning to appreciate, care about, and work with others. Each local council is also encouraged to provide informal educational opportunities through self-reliance training, child care, camps, and club programs.

- Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA): This group includes high school juniors and seniors and junior college students interested in the field of marketing and distribution (retailing and wholesaling) as a vocation.

- 4-H Program and Youth Development: This organization serves as a youth education program of the Cooperative Extension Service. Volunteer adult and junior leaders guide the program with the help of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and participating governments. The program assists youths in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, contributing members of society.

- Future Homemakers of America: Membership includes young men and women studying home economics and related occupational courses. Through home economics education, youth assume social roles in areas of personal growth, family life, vocational preparation, and community involvement.

- Junior Achievement: Volunteers from the teaching profession and from business and industry provide students with economic education and opportunities to learn how the American business and economic systems operate.

- National FFA Organization: Membership is comprised of students of agriculture/agribusiness in public schools. Organized under the National Vocational Education Act to foster character development, agricultural leadership, and responsible citizenship and to supplement training opportunities for students preparing for careers in farming and agribusiness.
(Schwartz & Turner, 1995, pp. 916, 926, 985, 1030, 1524, 1525, 1579, 1580)

Schools can encourage students to participate in these clubs and organizations by providing the use of school facilities for meetings, announcing and/or posting club and organizational events in the school, providing parents and students with membership information, and encouraging faculty and staff to volunteer their services.

The second effort to enhance rural students' life choices involves community/school partnerships. Schools can play a key role by seeking out and initiating partnerships with businesses in local and neighboring communities. Community-based service learning is a type of partnership the literature repeatedly emphasizes as an avenue for developing in rural students the ability to create visions for

their future--an environment that can encourage what Donaldson (1986) identifies as the "questioning youth." Elliott (1987) indicates that community service can create opportunities for students to, ". . . gain self-confidence, exposure and work experience, while contributing to the growth and health of their communities" (pp. 33-34).

During the spring of 1994, a series of rural education forums was held by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in conjunction with the Departments of Education in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Participants were selected because of their affiliation with rural education and/or their direct or indirect involvement in community-based learning projects. Forum participants shared how community-based learning can be utilized for teaching applied skills, or school-to-life skills, to rural youth. For example, a rural school in the state of Washington that has committed itself to graduating students who are life-long learners and are connected to their community in productive and meaningful ways. In order to achieve this goal, they have included the community as an integral part of the educational process. Students have access to 150 different courses with placement in the community for 16 hours each trimester. The experience helps students learn about career options, about their community--including occupational opportunities, and about educational and/or training requirements needed to pursue their postsecondary aspirations. In addition, the school has garnered the following additional benefits by pursuing community-based learning:

- Greater support for the school and community's youth resulted from increased community involvement.
- While students are involved in the community courses, teachers have time for restructuring and planning activities.
- There is greater utilization of the community as a resource (i.e., providing instruction, transportation, and technical assistance to staff).
- Life-long learning is valued and modeled by the whole community.
- Students can relate the relevance of their education to the "real" world beyond school.

Appendix A provides a list of community-based activities that other schools and communities in the region are engaged in to expand rural students' knowledge and preparation for post-high school opportunities. The activities and expected student benefits were developed through a brainstorming activity with forum participants. Participants gave examples of activities from their schools and communities and identified perceived and observed benefits these activities had for students.

CONCLUSION

Nachtigal (1979) has argued that in rural areas school issues are community issues. For rural schools to be effective, they must have community support. Elliott (1987) supports this view of community involvement:

> At a time when geographic isolation and economic decline place rural students at risk, rural schools will need to form partnerships with local communities that will maximize the inherent strengths of both. Working cooperatively rural schools and rural communities must initiate programs that will maintain the school as the focal point of the community in order to overcome the weaknesses. (p. 39)

In addition to an overall commitment of rural schools and communities to their youth, parents need to become partners involved in educational and occupational life-choice education. Research has found rural students' life plans and aspirations to be most influenced by parents. However, rural parents also tend to have the most limited expectations for the young people in their communities. An increase in parental expectations alone could have a major impact on life planning for rural students.

School climate can also play a major role in rural student aspirations. Quaglia (in press) defines aspirations as, "An individual's desire to achieve a goal coupled with the necessary commitments in the present that foster the attainment of a desired outcome." Based on this definition, aspirations have two components, ambitions and inspiration. Ambitions, from a student perspective, are goals for the future. Inspiration describes when an individual becomes involved in an activity for its intrinsic value and enjoyment

(Quaglia, in press). When a student has either high ambitions and low inspiration or low ambitions and high inspiration, they are, according to Quaglia, experiencing separation. Quaglia (in press) describes the importance of the school in student aspirations:

> If one accepts that aspirations are vital to student success, it then becomes essential to understand how this concept fits within the school environment. To prepare students to meet the societal challenges of today, the educational system must allow students to take command of their own lives, encouraging them to make full and ready use of all their potential capacities.

Eight school conditions that have proven to create a positive climate for enhancing student aspirations are:

1. Belonging: A type of relationship between two or more individuals characterized by a sense of connection, support, and community.
2. Achievement: The condition of achievement for students must include effort, accomplishment, citizenship, and perseverance.
3. Curiosity: Is characterized as inquisitiveness, an eagerness and strong desire to learn new or interesting things, and a desire to satisfy the mind with new discoveries.
4. Mentoring: A form of intervention necessary for the maintenance of motivation in students.
5. Self-Confidence: The extent of one's belief in oneself.
6. Empowerment: Allows students to take control and gain mastery of their actions.
7. Risk-Taking: Is defined as behavior that is informed by a knowledge of potential losses involved, an awareness of the significance of such losses, and some uncertainty about those losses.
8. Excitement: The condition of excitement involves being "worked-up" about something, being emotionally involved, and having an intense experience or desire of some kind.

Case studies have also indicated that rural students must "buy-in" to what they are learning. In other words, students want to feel that what they are learning is relevant and applicable to their life goals which, in turn, are realistic and attainable. The task of constructing a life plan is often developed from students' backgrounds and experience.

> The life experiences of secondary students have been determined in part by the families in which they are members, the communities in which they live, and the schools that they attend. These life experiences manifest themselves in the educational and occupational expectations of students. (McCracken, Barcinas, & Wims, 1991, p. 3)

School-to-work legislation will assist schools in expanding students' knowledge of career opportunities and preparation. For many rural areas, this can provide an opportunity to involve students in community revitalization. Haller and Virkler (1993) believe that youth aspire to what they know or can imagine. School-to-work systems can expand rural youths' imagination of what their communities can be. As schools and communities work together to bridge the school-to-work gap for their youth, the public can keep state policymakers informed of how government can better support the transition. Issues that policymakers need to address include more alternatives for school liability insurance for students active in the community, more flexibility in state standards for school accreditation (i.e., number of student-teacher contact hours, non-certified instructors), and increase cooperation of state and local agencies to create safe learning environments.

One state has already begun to address the issue of how insurance will be provided to students at work sites. In the state of Washington, a student participating in a school-sponsored, work-based learning experience is defined as a "volunteer" and covered by industrial insurance. A task force is developing specific guidelines for unpaid, work-based learning experiences of student volunteers. Work-based learning experiences will also change the amount and type of interactions students have with teachers. For example, if the school provides learning experiences for students where they are in the community, the teacher at the school has less contact time with the student and more preparation-time to enhance in-classroom activities. In addition, the "teachers" in the community may not be certified; the community member/teacher is sharing his/her expertise in a particular occupation. As the number of interactions between students and community members increase inside and outside of the classroom, schools will need

cooperation from state and local agencies to ensure a safe learning environment, i.e., cooperation in providing access to background checks on community members working closely with students at fees affordable to districts is necessary.

As school-to-work legislation becomes more ingrained in the structure of schools and their learning environments, parents, community members, and others involved in education, need to keep policymakers informed of issues and obstacles they are facing. This is especially true for rural schools and communities that already have limited resources and economies to draw from. School-to-work systems in rural schools and communities will look very different from those that will develop in urban areas.

Rural communities are very diverse, but they all share a concern for the futures of their communities and their youth. Given the changes occurring throughout the United States, and especially in rural areas, rural schools and communities can no longer ignore some imminent changes. By providing their youth with a commitment to stay or the skills to leave, they will receive, in return, a new vision for their communities that can integrate changes to meet demands of a changing world and maintain community culture and traditions that are valued.

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SUGGESTED READINGS

Braunger, J., & Hart-Landsberg, S. (1994). *Crossing boundaries: Explorations in integrative curriculum.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Specific examples are provided of integrative curriculum use in schools. Integrative curriculum efforts are explored from three perspectives: Integrating subjects, integrating people, and integrating activities. Another section focuses on some of the beliefs about teaching and learning which underlie classroom, program, and school efforts to integrate curriculum. Other issues addressed are how to support integrative curriculum efforts and creating an environment conducive to change and enhanced student and teacher learning.

Cobb, R. A., McIntire, W. G., & Pratt, P. A. (1989). Vocational and educational aspirations of high school students: A problem for rural America. *Research in Rural Education, 6*(2), 11-16.

This article is a review of data from the longitudinal study entitled *High School and Beyond* (HSB). This review was used to determine the differences in rural and urban academic and vocational aspirations and to compare that with data collected from the state of Maine. The purpose of this comparison was to determine if Maine's documented problem of low rural student aspirations may be related to a national phenomenon. The authors found not only differences between rural and urban student aspirations, but also differences between educational and career aspirations and quality of life aspirations. Conclusion is made that low rural student aspirations is a national problem.

Donaldson, Jr., G. A. (1986). Do you need to leave home to grow up? The rural adolescent's dilemma. *Research in Rural Education, 3*(3), 121-125.

This paper examines the dilemma rural youth face when choosing between community values and traditions and perceived occupational success outside of the communities. The author suggests that there is a strong linkage between rural youths' lives and developmental paths and the survival of rural communities and cultures. Rural youth from one community are examined to identify patterns of choice open to youth and the variations among youths' interpretations of their options and their definitions of growing up. The paper also offers suggestions to social service professionals to help them better serve rural youth, families, and communities.

Dudenhefer, P. (1993, Fall). Poverty in the rural United States. *Western Wire*, 17-24.

This article provides a comprehensive look at poverty in rural America. The article summarizes the work of a Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty formed by the Rural Sociological Society. A review is made of the history of poverty in rural areas and differences in rural and urban poverty attributes. A description is made of who the rural poor are and where they are located. Social issues of rural poverty are discussed such as rural culture, the role of community, the phenomena of the working rural poor, and theories of human capital. The changing character of the rural economy is outlined in relation to economic conditions facing rural areas. Difficulties the United States government has had in dealing with rural policy and what can be done is also reviewed. Ten theories to help researchers better understand the causes of rural poverty is briefly summarized.

Elliott, J. (1987). *Rural students at risk*. Paper presented at the Annual Success for Students At-Risk Conference, Chicago, February 4-7, 1987. Iowa City, IA: Iowa University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 285 708)

Identifying and describing students in rural schools who are at potential educational risk is the purpose of this study which involved extensive taped interviews with administrators, teachers, and students in selected rural schools in Iowa. Various indicators of educational risk in selected rural environments suggest that students are decidedly disadvantaged by geographic isolation and economic decline. Achieving a high level of community support is a necessary step in attaining educational excellence. A collaborative effort with other districts is key to providing a full range of academic, vocational, and extra-curricular activities, and accessing technological advances otherwise unavailable. Curricula must be expanded to prepare students either to remain in their rural communities as contributing citizens, or to leave with confidence and skills. Viable vocational and occupational experiences, high quality personal counseling, and strong counselor-parent partnerships must be available to rural students if they are to maximize career attainment.

Haas, T. (1992). Leaving home: Circumstances afflicting rural America during the last decade and their impact on public education. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(4), 7-28.

This article describes the economic, demographic, social, and emotional status of rural Americans, and the accelerating forces that are permanently changing the traditions of rural living. It takes a look at the reality of what "rural" means and what the future holds for rural students and schools. The article draws attention to economic trends, the rise of poverty, social changes, and education.

Haller, E. J., & Monk, D. H. (1992). Youth migration from rural areas. In Twelfth Annual Yearbook of the American Education Finance Association (Ed.), *Who pays for students diversity: Population changes and educational policy* (1991, see ED 343 255). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 365 479)

The persistent net loss of young people from rural areas has potentially contradictory implications for educational policy. Analysis is made of the effects of out-migration by school aggregate socioeconomic status, school aggregate academic ability, rural location, school size, isolated location, and the extent of academic and vocational curricular offerings. School size was the most important predictor of both advanced academic and vocational course offerings. However, neither school size nor curricular offerings had any important impact on youth out-migration. In contrast, relatively immutable structural aspects of schools and communities coupled with individual student characteristics seems the primary determinants of migration. There seems to be little merit in the notion that rural decision makers can affect youth migration by manipulating school curriculum.

Haller, E. J., & Virkler, S. J. (1993). Another look at rural-nonrural differences in students' educational aspirations. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 9*(3), 170-178.

A different perspective is offered on the educational aspirations of rural-nonrural students. The authors attribute a small difference in rural-nonrural educational aspirations to be a combination of differences in socioeconomic status between rural and nonrural families and differences in exposure to various occupations. The conclusion is made that to have educational policy eliminate the difference in rural-nonrural educational aspirations is likely unachievable. For one reason, differences that are based in family dynamics are largely beyond the reach of educators. Furthermore, raising occupational aspirations of students may have the effect of intensifying the out-migration of talented youth from rural areas.

Helge, D. (1990). *A national study regarding at-risk students*. Bellingham, WA: National Rural Development Institute, Western Washington University.

This paper presents results of a survey designed to compare the incidence of various types of at-risk characteristics among students in rural, urban, and suburban school districts. The study also compares incidence of at-risk students with one or more disabilities and students at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.

McCracken, J. D., Barcinas, J. D. T., & Wims, D. (1991). High school curriculum and aspirations of students in Ohio and southwest Georgia. In Ohio Agricultural Research Development Center, *School and Community Influences on Occupational and Educational Plans of Rural Youth.*

This paper examines the relationship between high school curriculum (academic, general, and vocational) and students' occupational and educational aspirations in rural schools. The study was conducted in Ohio and then replicated in Southwest Georgia. In both sites, students in the academic curriculum: (1) had an under-representation of non-whites; (2) had a higher mean socioeconomic status (SES); (3) had the highest SES index scores for their desired and expected occupations; (4) were more confident about their occupational aspirations; and (5) were more likely to plan to further their education and pursue that education immediately after high school. Further research should focus on reasons for gender and ethnicity differences. Educators should consider the desirability of classifying students into specific programs.

McGranahan, D. A. (1994). *Rural America in the global economy: Recent socioeconomic trends*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 7, 1994.

This paper uses 1980 and 1990 Census data to examine current socioeconomic conditions in rural areas and trends over the past decade. The author first highlights some broader national and international economic changes and their relevance to rural areas and people. Spotlight is given to declining earnings opportunities of young adults, especially those with low levels of education. Next, focus of the report is directed to family structure and poverty and how that affects rural children. In the final section of the report, examination is made of the stresses on the education system as a result of a changing socioeconomic context.

Miller, B. A. (1991). *Distress and survival: Rural schools, education, and the importance of community*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

This report addresses community and educational issues of rural America as the United States enters the 1990s. After a description of the collapse of the mining industry in a small, rural community, a review of the changing economies of rural areas is made. Utilizing the school as a resource for community development is advocated. Three approaches for using the school as an agent for community development are described: School as community center, community as curriculum, and school-based economic development. Included is a process for assisting schools to become proactive in community development, including activities, focusing questions, and sample community related curriculum projects teachers could use.

Quaglia, R. (1989). Student aspirations: A critical dimension in effective schools. *Research in Rural Education, 6*(2), 7-9.

This paper advocates the inclusion of student aspirations as another factor that is characteristic of instructionally effective schools. The author believes that students' aspirations influence what they become in adulthood. Therefore, it is the responsibility of educators to provide learning environments that encourage students to raise their aspirations. The purpose of the article is to emphasize the importance of increasing student aspirations as a component of effective schooling strategies.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Elliott, J. P., & Bills, D. B. (1993). *The effects of rural schools and communities on adult adjustment: A ten year follow-up of rural Iowa youth.* Vancouver, BC: Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of British Columbia.

In response to the lack of research on the long-term effects of rural schools and communities on healthy adult adjustment and occupational success, research was conducted to identify significant factors that affect the occupational plans and psychological health of students from small, rural school districts in Iowa. Students who participated in an initial study in 1988 were included to examine the long-term effects of rural schools and communities on adulthood adjustment.

APPENDIX A

Community-Based Activities and Expected Benefits from 1994 Rural Education Forums

Activity	Expected Student Benefits
Career Exploration	• Increase appreciation for community • Expand awareness of career options • Encourage postsecondary education and/or training • Help develop structure in classroom learning
Clean Up Pioneer Cemetery	• Provide impetus to research • Establish partnership with historical society • Improve writing skills • Develop personal relationship skills • Develop sense of ownership • Increase connection with community
Community Information Brochure	• Learn design layout • Learn about community • Improve desktop publishing skills
Community Service *Elementary tutoring, food bank, senior center, Headstart, creek monitoring, recycling*	• Develop attitude of volunteerism • Develop feeling of serving others • Create awareness of community needs • Develop personal empowerment • Gain hands-on experience
Community Service Survey *Elicited student help in conducting surveys to help make decisions about retail service*	• Learn how to survey • Learn how to keep records • Learn how to interview • Learn how to make orders • Learn importance of follow-through
Convalescent Center Volunteers	• Develop sense of pride in work • Receive training in working with elderly • Develop awareness and sensitivity to problems and needs of elderly • Develop responsibility skills • Learn history • Build self-esteem
Cross-Age Tutoring	• Develop work ethic (i.e., punctuality, daily attendance, accountability) • Develop communication skills • Build self-esteem
Daycare	• Work with real kids • Learn child development

Activity	Expected Student Benefits
Environment Club *White paper recycling in the school*	• Learn problem-solving skills • Learn public/persuasive speaking skills • Develop informational video tape • Raise self-esteem
Establish High School Volunteers for Visitor Center	• Develop interpersonal skills • Develop appreciation for community • Meet a community need • Provide interaction with adults/mentors • Develop sense of responsibility • Develop sense or empowerment
Family Math Night	• Learn problem solving strategies • Encourage students, teachers, parents, grandparents to all work together
Health Care Volunteer Program for At-Risk Youth	• Learn about community service • Develop relationship building • Develop empathy for those in need • Provide vocational learning experiences
Homework Network for All (6-60)	• Increase community relations • Learn instructional strategies • Learn communication skills • Provide opportunity to practice that which is being learned • Provide opportunity for application of concepts
Internships	• Develop sense of direction • Learn career options • Develop sense of value • Provide reality check on capabilities • Learn interview skills • Provide opportunity to apply classroom skills • Develop personal relationship skills • Learn problem solving skills • Gain work experience
Job Training Program	• Learn cooperative work skills • Develop work ethic • Develop service orientation • Earn money
Newspaper Articles to Generate Sponsors for Yearbook	• Learn career options through interviewing sponsors • Network with journalistic sponsors • Support local businesses

Activity	Expected Student Benefits
Planets on the Highway *Used county road to mark scaling of solar system*	• Learn curriculum content (solar system) • Learn technical skills (scaling) • Learn persuasive argumentative writing (acquiring use of road) • Learn how to manifest necessary equipment and supplies • Develop dedication, determination, and communication skills
School-Based Enterprise *Farm equipment repair and sales*	• Learn all aspects of running a business from repair to marketing and sales
Student Anthology	• Improve writing skills • Provide opportunity for students to be published • Distribute student writings to the community
Students Working with Food Bank	• Learn about social services and community needs • Encourage cross-generation activities • Develop goal-setting skills • Involve students in fund raising • Develop good citizenship through role modeling
Water Quality Study	• Learn practical chemistry • Learn biology/micro-biology • Learn diversity of water use • Learn to observe resources and use (i.e., land use) • Provide contextual learning experience
Wildlife Habitat	• Learn to plot area and flora • Interact with adults/community • Develop community interest
Work-Study Program	• Receive work experience while paid for work and receiving school credit • Establish partnership with neighboring community
World of Work *Bringing the community into the school*	• Develop connectedness between education and the real world • Develop appreciation of jobs • Develop connection with people who work • Opportunity to network
Writing Articles to be Published in Local Newspaper	• Improve writing skills • Provide opportunity for students to be published • Expand audience for writing